

Preliminary remarks by the EU and its Member States

Draft Outline Document for the Ministerial Outcome Document of the 2019 UN Environment Assembly

“Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”

General remarks

- The EU and its Member States welcome the opportunity to provide initial views on the draft of the Ministerial Outcome Document (MOD) and appreciate the process the UNEA Presidency set up to come to a meaningful outcome document in an inclusive and transparent manner.
- The concept note currently disconnects with the proposed outline for the MOD. It is suggested to better align those two documents as a basis for future work.
- The MOD should have a form that is attractive to politicians, citizens and other stakeholders as well as the media, in order to get attention and optimize its impact.
- In this sense, the vision could be reformulated in view of not only developing partnership, which is one of possible means for achieving the objective, but also in view of “working towards circular economy and more sustainable consumption and production systems”.
- We would welcome a strong and ambitious outcome document that amplifies the need to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns and the importance of circular economy and innovative solutions to address environmental challenges.
- The MOD should be structured along a few priorities to keep the aim of having a short, focused, action oriented outcome, which is understandable and formulated in not too technical language.

- We would also hope that the outcomes of UNEA4, including its outcome document would provide useful input to the different processes/ministerial meetings relevant to sustainable development and environment in 2019, e.g. on biodiversity and chemicals.
- The MOD should also reinforce the call to the international community, not starting from scratch but following up with what is already in place, both at global and regional level, and increase ambition in implementation, in particular of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.
- Generally, we would welcome an ambitious MOD as regards the need to promote circular economy and solutions for sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- The MOD should particularly reflect SDG12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and its 11 targets and thus reflect the respective issues as consumer information, public procurement as well as food waste and food losses
- The MOD should build on the outcomes of previous UNEAs and the progress of its implementation, whilst being informed by important flagship reports such as the GEO6 report, the Chemicals Outlook as well as the reports of the International Resource Panel, underlining the importance of the science policy interface. In this regard, we support reference to GEO6 and the International Resource Panel.
- The MOD should also underline that effective mechanisms for monitoring, review and accountability at national, regional and international level are essential tools to ensure and support an enhanced evidence based decision-making process.
- We recognize and support the importance of partnerships, as well as innovation; however, we also see the need to promote/encourage other processes, such as the need to strengthen the science policy interface and its follow up in implementation in the context of SCP.
- It is good to promote partnerships, stakeholder engagement, citizens' science, etc.; but UNEA should keep as an important focus the role and responsibility of governments to adopt and implement the necessary legislative and regulatory frameworks and take action. This should be done in cooperation with relevant actors, as appropriate.
- .As for "Innovative solutions", not only should UNEA focus on technologies but also on lifestyles, incentives, governance and institutions.
- Furthermore, a reference to gender equality/mainstreaming as well as a human rights perspective is missing.

Specific remarks

- We want to highlight the different nature of the proposed priority areas: whereas priorities 1 and 3 seem to highlight more horizontal, enabling aspects, priority 2 should more reflect or be related to the theme agreed for UNEA4.
- One possibility is to split the priority 2 into two or three substantive "focus areas" and leave priorities 1 and 3 as "enablers" in the general text of the outcome document.
- Certainly, we recognize the importance of data and monitoring, as well as engagement of non-state actors. We would like to note that there is a strong linkage between priorities 1 and 3 that not seems to be addressed: in particular, if the gathering of data will be further democratised via digital solutions/applications, and when this contributes to increased transparency, this will support 'robust engagement'.

Main priority 1:

- The main priority 1 on data and technology is important, but also very ambitious and quite technical. We do support the need for comparable environmental data at global level. However, it is in practice a quite difficult issue, since regions and countries have different approaches, standards and capacities. Therefore, this section could be streamlined.

Main priority 2:

- Generally, in terms of formulation, this priority area should take into account outcomes and agreements of relevant processes, e.g. HLPF 2018 as well as be more precise and understandable.
- The main priority 2, which aims at fostering the decoupling of the economic growth from resource use, should push forward the concept of resource efficiency through a life-cycle approach, including by deploying innovation in technology and standards in materials quality.
- Three focus areas have been identified. These may be (but could be others, depending on the outcomes of the different reports):
 - Food/sustainable food systems and sustainable land management
 - Sound management of chemicals and waste, (including plastics, marine litter, textiles)
 - natural resources / biodiversity

- The importance and contribution of resource efficiency and circular economy to achieving the climate objectives should be highlighted. In this regard, a reference to the importance to achieve the aims of the Paris Agreement and the implementation of nationally determined contributions should be added.
- This priority should also make the case for implementing as well as adopting policies with co-benefits between different environmental objectives, in particular biodiversity and climate change.
- We strongly support reference to the full implementation of the 10-Year-Framework of Programmes on SCP.
- A reference to the important role of non-state actors (local authorities, cities, private sector, finance sector, academia, NGOs etc.) is missing. In particular, the role of cities should be highlighted.
- We also suggest adding a reference to the responsibility of producers, to stimulate the market for secondary raw materials; and also, a reference to promote enhanced corporate social responsibility and foster international cooperation towards more sustainable value chains.

Main priority 3:

- Private sector/businesses should appear in the headline as essential element in partnerships, alongside with already mentioned civil society, citizens and academia.
- A reference to civil society organizations for the promotion of SCP and sustainable lifestyles could be added.
- A reference to the importance of awareness raising on environmental issues at the local level could be added.